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ABSTRACT

This report examines factors that influence potential high-school principal candidates' attraction to a high-school principalship. The research focuses on the perspective of potential candidates' evaluation of specific job and organizational attributes. Using job-choice theory as a conceptual framework, the article discusses which attributes have the greatest influence on potential candidates' intentions to seek and accept a high-school principal position. For the study, 169 secondary administrators in one Western state were surveyed regarding the influence job attributes have on their attraction to the high-school principalship, their likelihood of seeking a high-school principalship, and their likelihood of accepting a position if offered. Results indicate that potential principals' job perceptions and intentions were more influenced by nonpecuniary aspects of work (sociopsychological attributes) than by economic incentives (objective attributes). The research validates earlier studies that found that subjective factors influence the organizational choice process. Namely, an individual's job choice is a way to implement self-concept, and so applicants who make career decisions based on psychological needs will be positively influenced by the self-enhancing subjective attributes of the organization. (Contains 66 references and an appendix listing potential principal responses to job attributes.) (RJM)

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ATTRACTION AND RETENTION[1] OF HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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[1]Study data originally included retention intentions of sitting high school principals. However, the theoretical model used in this study explained so little variance in principal retention that the results reported here include only job attraction data from potential high school principal candidates.

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ABSTRACT

Many have raised concerns regarding the shortage of qualified candidates for secondary principalships. Using job choice theory as a conceptual framework, this study examined factors which influence potential high school principal candidates' attraction to a high school principalship. Secondary administrators (N=169) in one western state were surveyed regarding the influence job attributes have on their attraction to the high school principalship, their likelihood of seeking a high school principalship, and likelihood of accepting a position if offered. Results indicate that potential principals' job perceptions and intentions are more influenced by non-pecuniary aspects of work (socio-psychological attributes) than by economic incentives (objective attributes). Original study data (not reported here) also included surveys of "sitting" high school principals in the same state on the same job factors. However, the job choice theory model did not adequately explain high school principal retention.

Introduction

For the past few years, many have projected shortages of secondary school executives (Bowles, 1990; Jordan, McCauley, & Comeaux, 1994; McCormick, 1987; Portin, Shen, & Williams, 1998). An exploratory study by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in conjunction with the Educational Research Service (ERS) also acknowledges a shortage of school principals (1998). In 1998, the state superintendents' association in our study state expressed a "serious concern" regarding the availability of qualified candidates for high school principals.

The high school principal shortage can be examined in part by studying recruitment and selection processes for principalship candidates. These processes can be examined from two perspectives. The first considers the decision making process from an administrative perspective. The processes and decision-making which lead to a contract offer include such things as administrative policies and procedures (e.g. position descriptions, application protocols, application screening, and candidate interviews), the sources from which potential candidates arise (e.g. within-district candidates versus external candidates), and the recruitment processes the organization uses to attract applicants (e.g. formal versus informal). The administrative perspective can be understood by elucidating the profile of the candidate the recruiter desires and the processes the organization uses to find, screen and hire the candidate.

The second component which influences the placement of a candidate in a high school principalship comes from the perspective of the candidate. This perspective can be summarized by answering the question: "What makes the job of the high school principalship attractive?"

This question can be answered in part by focusing on the *perceptions* the potential candidate has about the position and his/her job or career *intentions*. A candidate's career intentions include the desire to seek a high school principalship and the decision to accept a high school principalship if offered.

Rynes (1991) cautions that perceptions and intentions are quite different from job choices: "Stating one's perceptions or intentions is a completely 'costless' exercise. In contrast, real job choices involves serious opportunity costs: Accepting one offer precludes accepting others (p. 436). There is little research which elucidates how perceptions and intentions are converted into actual job choices.

The purpose of this study is to provide information about the potential high school principal candidate as a decision-maker in the job attraction process. In contrast to examining the selection of a high school principal from an administrator (district office) perspective, this research focuses on the perspective of potential candidates' evaluation of specific job and organizational attributes. Specifically, using job choice theory as a conceptual framework, the study examines which attributes have the greatest influence on potential candidates' attraction to a high school principalship as well as their intentions to seek and accept a high school principal position.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework draws from the research of Phillip Young and associates of Ohio State University who believe that the decision of an applicant to choose an organization is influenced by both job and organizational attributes. These attributes have been integrated into three job choice theories as originally outlined by Behling, Labovitz and Gainer (1968) and

articulated in the educational setting by Young, Rinehart and Place (1989).

Objective Theory

The objective theory of job choice recognizes candidates as "economic beings" (Young, Rinehart and Place, 1989). The candidate views the value of the organization in terms of its relative financial worth to the individual. Thus, the candidate is most likely to choose an organization that offers the most economic benefits (e.g.salary, fringe benefits, opportunity for advancement). The theory presumes that "the position selection process is based on a weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of each offer in terms of *objectively* measurable factors" and "each of these items is weighted in terms of its relative worth to the individual, and the results are combined into some over-all index of desirability (Behling et al., 1968, p. 14-15)."

Subjective Theory

The subjective theory of job choice recognizes candidates as socio-psychological beings. The candidate views the value of the organization in terms of meeting his/her socio-psychological needs. "The subjective theory emphasizes the congruence between personality patterns (of applicants) and the image of the firm" (Tom, 1971, p.5). Thus, the candidate's perception of the work environment and the "perceived ability of the firm to provide satisfaction for deep-seated and often unrecognized emotional needs of the candidate" (Behling et al., 1968, p.15-16) is key to his or her decision to accept a contract.

Critical Contact Theory

The critical contact theory proposes that the candidate is incapable of differentiating among firms on the basis of objective or subjective criteria because: (1) the depth of contact with the firm is too limited, (2) recruiting firms tend to "blur" the differences between competing

organizations and (3) the candidate lacks experience to evaluate the information provided by the firm (Behling et al., 1968). Critical contact theorists therefore believe that since the candidate cannot differentiate between competing firms based on objective or subjective criteria, they make a choice based on such things as "the appearance and behavior of the recruiter, the nature of the physical facilities and the efficiency of processing the paper work associated with his application" (Behling et al., 1968, p.17).

Additionally, Young and his colleagues (1989, p. 330) have argued that candidates are rational beings who are mainly concerned with the work itself. Thus, the specific job requirements and job expectations (often communicated through the initial contact) are important to the candidate when he/she considers a job offer. This interpretation of critical contact theory argues that the work itself has the greatest influence on employee recruitment and retention.

"Jobs are comprised of multiple attributes or characteristics (and) virtually all attraction models suggest that these attributes play a prominent role in influencing attraction outcomes" (Young, Rinehart & Henneman, 1993, p. 55-56). Researchers have recognized that while many of these attributes are obvious (i.e. pay scale), there exists a greater number of "potentially relevant attributes" which may also influence job choice. Behling et al. (1968) integrate the three theories of job choice:

> It should be emphasized, however, that the recruiter's problem is not one of choosing the 'right' one from among the three theories of position selection. Based on a general knowledge of human behavior gleaned from the social sciences, a cautiously developed assumption can be drawn that should correlate with experiences of practicing recruiters: the average individual will be affected by elements of all three theories, but in varying degrees, in varying circumstances (p. 18).

Job Choice Theory Literature

There exists a large body of research conducted by industrial and organizational psychologists concerning the applicant as a decision maker in the job selection process. This study focuses on those factors which influence an educator's choice to take an administrative position. This decision is made through a evaluation process by the job seeker which is influenced by the sources from which information is acquired and by the intensity in which the information is being pursued (Schwab, Rynes, and Aldag, 1987). The outcome of this evaluation process depends upon:

> (1) perceptions of the job's attributes, vis-`a-vis the job seeker's attributes preference function (e.g., his or her relative emphasis on pay, type of work, etc.); and (2) the type of decision processes used to evaluate those attributes (e.g., whether jobs are evaluated in relation to other offer, to subjective notions of "ideal" jobs, or to minimal requirements for a certain standard of living (Schwab, et al., 1987, p. 133).

Thus, the decision and evaluation procedure has both content and process aspects, the outcome of which (i.e. dependent variables) can be observed by job decision behaviors. These fall into two categories (Schwab, et al., 1987). The first relates to the decision to apply for and, if offered, accept the job. The second concerns itself with the "quality" of the obtained position and deals with such things as satisfaction of the choice and commitment to the organization, both of which ultimately influence the decision to remain with, or depart from the organization.

In order to integrate the many findings which explain job choice behavior into a coherent research stream, Behling, Labovitz and Gainer (1968) proposed three separate theories of job choice, namely, objective theory, subjective theory and critical contact theory.

Objective Theory

The objective theory of job choice views candidates as "economic beings" who "seek to

maximize their economic status by joining the organization that is perceived as being the most economically competitive" (Young, et al., 1989). Implicit to the objective theory perspective is gaining the understanding that "the position selection process is based on a weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of each offer in terms of objectively measurable factors" (Behling, et al., 1968). Therefore, in addition to weighing salary and benefit packages, the candidate might also consider such things as prospect for advancement, educational opportunities and location of the job. "Each of these items is weighted in terms of its relative importance to the individual, and the results are combined into some over-all index of desirability" (Behling, et al., 1968, p. 15).

Subjective Theory

The subjective theory concerns itself with the psychological aspects of the candidate. Subjective theorists concern themselves with "the perceived ability of the firm to provide satisfaction for deep-seated and often unrecognized emotional needs of the candidate" (Behling, et al., 1968, p. 15-16). Thus, the candidate will tend to choose an organization which the candidate believes will most likely meet his or her psychological needs as noted by Gellerman (1964):

> When a job seeker is allowed free choice, his search is usually a thinly disguised version of psychological-advantage seeking. He seeks a job in a company and industry which, as far as he can tell, provide the kind of environment which is most compatible with his psychological advantage (p. 237).

Barlow's (1965) work with engineers provides an example of the subjective theory approach: "Those (organizations) that build a corps of satisfied, productive employees by relating the psychological needs and expectations of engineers to the jobs it has, will forge ahead" (p. 24-25).

Tom (1971) provided empirical evidence for the subjective theory by demonstrating that the similarity between the profiles of candidates and their most preferred organizations was significantly greater than the similarity between the profiles of candidates and their least preferred organization. "These results and conclusions provide empirical support for the Subjective Theory of recruiting. The findings of this study support the conclusions that subjective factors do play an important role in the recruiting process" (Tom, 1971, p.573).

Tom (1971) argued that the subjective theory is analagous to Super's (1953) theory of role personality in the vocational choice process. Super believed that "the process of vocational development is essentially that of developing and implementing self-concept" (p. 83). In support of the idea that an individual chooses an occupation as a means of implementing self-concept, Englander (1960) found that educational majors, as opposed to those who did not major in education, perceived teaching as a means of implementing their self-concept. A similar study using nursing students supported Englander's results (Morrison, 1962). Tom (1971) believes that Super's theory can be extended to the understanding that "the choice of any particular organization as an employer may also be a means of implementing an individual's self-concept" (p.575). Thus, the image of the organization may also have an influence on job choice as understood through subjective theory.

There is limited research which provides evidence of the influence of subjective factors on the job choice of educators. One such study focused on the external work environment of teachers (Rynes & Lawler, 1983). In this study, hypothetical written job descriptions varied the geographical location of the school district and the location of the school within the district. A final evaluation revealed that teachers preferred to be in the Midwest (as opposed to other areas

of the country) and "out of inner city schools" (p. 623). Pounder and Young (1996) emphasize the influence of subjective factors in job choice decisions:

> Organizations may provide specific work climates that can fulfil employees' psycho-social needs such as school or district climates based more on democratic leadership than bureaucratic leadership. The choice of one school district over another or administering over teaching rests with the fit between a person's psycho-social needs and the organizational climate of a school or district (p.289).

Critical Contact Theory

Critical contact theorists believe that the candidate "is incapable of differentiating among firms" (Behling, et al., 1968, p. 17) based on objective or subjective criteria because (Behling, et al., 1968): (a) the length and depth of contact of the employee with the firm is limited, (b) recruitment competition tends to "blur" the differences between competing firms and (c) the candidate generally lacks the experience to evaluate various firms and their offers. Thus, critical contact theorists believe that the elements discussed above:

> ...may cause a candidate to see the offers he receives and the firms making them as being more or less identical in terms of both objective and subjective factors. Thus, the recruit grasps at such things as the appearance and behavior of the recruiter, the nature of the physical facilities of the firm, and its efficiency in processing the paper work associated with his application, because these are the only tangible means of differentiating among the offers (Behling, et al., 1968, p. 17).

Schwab, Rynes and Aldag (1987) also believe applicants make decisions about employment opportunities with limited information about jobs and employing organizations. Their belief supports critical contact theorists who propose that the decisions made by a candidate about an organization are greatly influenced by the initial contact with the organization.

Young et al. (1989) has extended critical contact theory by proposing that the initial

contact "is influenced both by the contact person (interviewer) and by the job information provided" (p. 331). Therefore, critical contact theory has also been interpreted to include the candidate's understanding of the "work itself" (Pounder & Young, 1996; Young, et al., 1989).

Several studies support critical contact theory. Retrospective-type studies require the candidates to recall their experiences as applicants in the job search process. A general finding from these types of studies is that the personality of the interviewer in relation to concern and personal warmth for the applicant correlates with the applicant's perception of receiving and accepting a job offer (Schmitt & Coyle, 1976). Other retrospective studies have demonstrated that younger interviewers were preferred over older interviewers (Alderfer & McCord, 1970; Hilgert & Easton, 1968). In addition, several studies have demonstrated that the level of knowledge an interviewer has about the job correlates with good vs. poor interviewers (Hilgert & Easton, 1968; Sutton & Carlton, 1962) and to how the applicant perceived his or her chances of receiving and accepting an job offer (Alderfer & McCord, 1970; Schmitt & Coyle, 1976).

Extending retrospective studies to experimental manipulation of attributes under controlled conditions, Rynes and Miller (1983) found that personal warmth of the interviewer and interviewer knowledge about the job influenced the perceptions that business administration students made about the desirability of a sales job. Likewise, Rogers and Sencoff (1978) confirmed that age of the interviewer had an influence on potential job candidates.

Young and Heneman (1986) introduced critical contact studies into the educational arena by conducting simulated teacher selection interviews with experienced educational administrators. Their study confirmed that potential teachers are more likely to accept a contract when the district representative (interviewer) projects personality factors such as personal

warmth. In another study Young, Place, Rinehart, Jury and Baits (1997) found that the:

> Contents of recruitment messages were found to interact with sex of an organizational representative and race of an applicant. Black applicants preferred female organizational representatives presenting recruitment messages emphasizing either work environment attributes or work itself attributes. White applicants preferred male organizational representatives presenting recruitment messages stressing only work environmental attributes (p. 86).

An Integrated Approach

The three theories of job choice (objective, subjective and critical contact) each have inherent strengths and weaknesses. No theory likely fully explains the job decision made by a candidate. Instead, in varying degrees and circumstances, each applicant will be influenced by elements of each theory (Behling et al., 1968).

Several studies have viewed job choice from a holistic approach which "assesses the relative strength of recruitment approaches based on different sources of applicant motivation, e.g. economic, psycho-social, or rational approaches" (Pounder & Young, 1996, p. 291). An example of a holistic approach to job choice was conducted by Harris and Fink (1987) who used "multi-attributes" to construct composite indices reflecting the job itself, compensation and the work environment. The researchers found statistically significant correlations between all three indices and perceptions of job attractiveness and the likelihood of accepting a job offer. In addition, Young, Rinehart and Heneman (1993) examined teacher response to economic, intrinsic and work context attributes (similar to objective, subjective and critical contact theories, respectively), while Young, Galloway and Rinehart (1990) examined applicant response to an administrator education program using similar criteria. The results confirm that organizational climate and work context produce stronger recruitment messages than economic incentives:

> Results of the present study indicate that applicants differentiated between the three categories of attributes in terms of their attractiveness. On average, the economic category of attributes was rated as significantly less attractive than the intrinsic and work context categories. Moreover, these attractiveness differences occurred regardless of applicant job experience and interviewer sex (Young, et al., 1993, p. 63).

Pounder and Young (1996) offer an explanation of why economic incentives are less appealing to educator applicants: Pay rates are about the same from district to district thus reducing the influence of objective criteria in the job choice process. In addition, from the body of research derived from holistic job preview studies they provide recommendations for school districts who desire to recruit individuals for school administration:

> Most importantly, school districts would likely be least effective stressing economic incentives of the district to potential candidates for an administrator position. Better success will be achieved by developing recruitment messages that emphasize information about the district's organizational climate and other psycho-social aspects of the work environment and/or specific characteristics of the work itself associated with a particular job opening (Pounder & Young, 1996, p. 291).

The Principal's Work Role and Responsibilities

The high school principalship is one of the most complex and challenging assignments in the public education system (Murphy & Louis, 1994; Roe & Drake, 1980). The principalship is about leadership--the ability to influence, persuade and motivate others. Assuming the responsibility of educational leader within a school community, the principal is "*the*, not *a*, major influence on the quality of education in a school" (DeRoche, 1985, p. v) and is "crucial to a school's effectiveness" (Lyons, 1999, p. 18). But the assignment extends beyond working with other educators on the matters of teaching and learning. A typical large high school principal (1500-3000 students in our study state) is also the manager of a 40 million dollar facility. The principal's teaching staff of 75-100 is supported by 50 others--cooks, custodians, secretaries,

aides, librarians, counselors--all of whose work needs to be defined and coordinated to support the educational program. In addition, the high school principal must lead and manage the "second curriculum", namely, the extracurricular activity program. This program, which includes both co-curricular (i.e. music, debate, drama) and extra-curricular (typically sports) activities begins at the conclusion of the academic class schedule and for many, is the start of the second eight-hour shift of the school day.

The principal's job does not stop at the school-house gate. The school is subject to numerous institutional and environmental influences which the principal must manage. The district office, state office of education, Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA), regulatory agencies (Occupational Health and Safety Association, Risk Management, Office of Civil Rights) and parents all impact the school. Indeed, the environment in which the principal functions is surrounded by an "external world that is becoming less predictable, less orderly, and more cluttered for principals" creating "a much more complicated managerial context within the school as well" (Louis & Murphy, 1994, p. 266).

Wentworth (1988) elaborates on the challenges a principal experiences as s/he assumes the role: "On the one hand, situations are said to be emergent and unique, while on the other, role learning, roles and organizations are possible" (p. 51). The complex nature of the high school principalship places demands on the principal to simultaneously consider "unique and emergent" conditions while assuming the role expected by the social structure of the school. This results in a certain amount of ambiguity in the perception of the role by the principal and by other members of the school community.

Even so, "the role of the principal is crucial to a school's effectiveness" (Lyons, 1999).

This role has changed over time, becoming more demanding in response to societal changes and school reform efforts. Using metaphors, Beck and Murphy (1993) have described major changes in the role expectations of the principal: Values broker (1920's), scientific manager (1930's), democratic leader (1940's), theory-guided administrator (1950's), bureaucratic executive (1960's), humanistic facilitator (1970's) and instructional leader (1980's). The 1990's have further identified the principal as a transformational leader (Hallinger, 1992). The transformational leader is involved in school "problem finding and problem solving" (p. 40). The ability to integrate a "variety of role orientations" (Hallinger, 1992, p. 44) is a necessary element of a successful school leader.

Many would argue that one of the most important roles of the principal is to provide leadership in articulating a vision for the school (Lyons, 1999; Abbott, 1994; Colon, 1994; Vann, 1994; Dubin, 1991). However, the challenge confronting the principal is in his or her ability to crystalize this vision into practices and policies that incrementally improve teaching and learning. This role is often achieved through the development of a school strategic plan. But whether by purposeful planning or "seat of the pants" leading, the philosophy and direction a school receives from its leader is one of the most important "gifts" s/he can bestow to the organization.

The desire for principals to reduce their managerial roles and assume the role of instructional leader of their schools became evident in the late 1970's. This trend continues today. The expectation that principals are *the* instructional leaders of the school is common in educational literature (Ellis, 1996; Hallinger, 1992; Jenkins & Bebar, 1994; Parker, 1997; Stronge, 1993). The role of instructional leader has many components including staff development, curriculum supervision, teacher evaluation, program assessment and textbook

selection, among others. However, the role of instructional leadership is not without its burdens, especially in secondary public school settings. Many high school principals may not be prepared for the challenges of leading an educational program (which contains a multitude of academic disciplines) for the purpose of school improvement. In addition to the complex nature of the high school curriculum, time is always the enemy of the principal. In reality, competing managerial and political expectations often limit the amount of time even the most committed principal can give to instructional leadership.

Hallinger (1992) suggests that the assignments and responsibilities of the prinicpal are in large part a reflection of the basic role of American public schools, i.e., "...to function as a vehicle for sorting and blending societal expectations" (p.43). Such expectations create role conflict and role ambiguity as various factions (whether inside or outside of the school organization) bring their expectations to the principal, often with pressure for implementation. Thus, a successful high school principal must command political expertise:

> ...an important facet of the principal's job involves interpreting community values and ensuring that they are reflected appropriately in the local school. By virtue of their position in the organizational hierarchy, principals find themselves at the intersection where forces seeking the maintenance of traditional values meet those that press for change (Hallinger, 1992. p. 43).

For example, the political environment of the principal often involves defending the school curriculum against attacks from fringe groups in an effort to preserve First Amendment rights (Agee, 1993). In such an environment, it is not uncommon for the principal to be threatened simultaneously with litigation from those who demand the protection of intellectual freedom on one hand, and those who want curriculum restrictions on the other. In addition to curriculum concerns, complaints about school teachers, types of school activities, team

membership determination, uniforms worn by dance club members, etc., are regular events in the life of a principal. Thus, a major role of the school leader is to mediate disputes which occur between members of the school community. And it goes without saying that the principal's ability to successfully resolve such disputes often determines his or her career tenure.

The role of the prinicpal also includes community leadership responsibilities. The prinicpal often serves with varying degrees of responsibility on a number of community decision-making boards (PTA, booster groups, drug and alcohol awareness boards, state athletic management boards, etc.). In addition, the onset of site-based management (SBM) requires the principal to function in an environment where non-school personnel serve as members of community councils which make decisions the school must accept and implement. Various SBM models define the role of the principal in a range from being the influential chair of a community council to being nothing more than an employee of the school (Drury, 1993).

The instructional leadership literature implies "that a managerial role for the principal is antithetical to high-quality instructional leadership" (Stronge, 1993, p. 2). Yet, Murphy (1994) believes that "while expectations are being added, little is being deleted from the principal's role" (p. 94-99), especially in relation to the management roles of the position (Portin, Shen & Williams, 1998). This "managerial imperative" (Cuban, 1984) is fundamental to the role of the principal. In a recent study conducted for the Utah Consortium for Educational Leaders (UCEL) (1996), principals reported the top ten "typical work week assignments" of their position. Only two of the assignments were directly related to instructional leadership (curriculum/instructional issues and teacher supervision) while the others were managerial in nature.

Typical managerial assignments of the principal include budget and financial matters,

transportation of students, food services administration, facilities maintenance, student behavior management, completion of reports, school board and community relations, legal issues and policy analysis and development (UCEL, 1996).

Other studies suggest principal roles which have both managerial and instructional leadership elements. For instance, through examination of the effective school literature, Hallinger et. al., (1983) believes that articulating the school's mission, promoting a positive learning environment and managing the instructional program are important roles of principals. Similarly, Lyons (1999) identifies the five most important duties of the principal: (1) Providing for a safe and positive school environment, (2) fostering good teaching and learning, (3) promoting good school-community relations, (4) hiring and developing a strong staff and (5) monitoring student progress (p.21). The same study reported that "managing time demands and paperwork" and "dealing with the bureaucracy, insensitive bureaucrats, red tape, politics, legislative demands and regulations" are the principals' greatest frustrations (p. 21). Portin, Shen and Williams (1998) intimate that these "external priorities" are pressuring the role orientation of the principal toward becoming managers.

Research indicates that successful school principals must be comfortable assuming multiple roles which have both managerial and instructional leadership elements. In addition, they must be able to make choices about where their time and attention is best spent. In any event, it is clear from examining the roles of principals that the leadership skills of goal setting, communication, decision making, planning and bringing people together to achieve common goals are characteristics of successful principals.

School reform efforts, popular in the 1990's, will continue to contribute to role ambiguity

but also motivate leadership role innovation. "The traditional roles of principals and other educators in schools are changing and will continue to be reshaped, redefined and renegotiated as restructuring occurs" (Bredeson, 1993, p. 34). That the role of the principal must change in an environment of restructuring is confirmed by a multitude of researchers who use such terms as "shared decision making", "shared management tactics", "decentralized leadership" and "transformational change" (Crow and Peterson, 1994; Leithwood, 1992; Murphy, 1994; Murphy & Hallinger, 1992; Murphy & Louis, 1994) to describe the leadership environment of a restructured school.

The discussion above lends evidence that the principal is the initiator of action for others in the school. Bridges (1978) supports this belief:

> "In all facts of the school's operations, the principal is viewed as guiding and influencing what others in the organization are thinking, feeling, valuing, believing and doing. The principal is the one who has a special sense of where the school is heading. It is the vision of the principal that presumably gives people something to work for and something to be proud of when it is achieved (p.12)."

The Principal's Role and Job Choice Theory

The role of the principal can be viewed from many perspectives. The examination of the principal's role confirms that s/he makes substantial contributions to the school community and assumes considerable responsibility for educational outcomes. The high school principalship requires a broad range of skills in the areas of school leadership and management. In addition, the principal needs functional knowledge about organizations, curriculum and human resources. These skills and responsibilities can, in part, be understood within the context of subjective and/or critical contact theory (through examination of the work itself).

In addition, principals receive incentives which may be examined through the perspective

of objective theory. These entitlements come to the principal by way of economic incentives, status attainment and opportunities for self-fulfillment (Bridges, 1978, p. 15). Implicit to the idea of objective theory is that a job can be defined in part by "weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each offer in terms of objectively measurable factors" (Behling et al., 1968, p. 14). While these factors may include various types of work, fundamental to objective theory are pecuniary rewards associated with the position including such things as salary compensation, benefits (medical), paid vacation, annuities and other retirement contributions and the prospect for advancement to higher positions.

In general, the high school principalship is the highest paid field officer in the public school system. A typical high school principal's salary exceeds that of his or her middle school and elementary associates when experience and professional degree are held constant. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) each year publishes the *National Survey of Salaries and Wages in Public Schools.* Known widely as an authoritative source of salary and wage data for K-12 education, the NASSP reported for the 1997-98 school year statistical data on salaries paid public school administrators. The mean of salaries paid elementary, middle and high school principals is $64,653, $68,740 and $74,380 respectively.

The average base salary of a high school principal in a medium-sized district in our study state exceeds that of a teacher with the same degree and years experience in the system by 24% to 55% depending upon administrative experience (School District Administrative Salary Schedule). Further, most school districts enhance this base salary through stipends for extracurricular responsibility and/or provide retirement annuities in addition to the retirement benefits offered all educators. Thus, the combined salary of public high school principals is

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exceeded only by district office level directors, assistant superintendents, and the superintendent. In addition, because many state retirement systems calculate retirement based on the highest three years of salary earned in the system, a retired public school principal continues to see enhanced financial benefits in retirement.

However, the salary may be insufficient to maintain loyalty and commitment to the principalship. A NASSP-sponsored study (1998) conducted by the Educational Research Service (ERS) reports that "lack of sufficient compensation" is the strongest barrier for filling high school principalships. This finding was true for urban, suburban and rural principals. The study found that what most discouraged applicants was "insufficient compensation" (60%) followed by "job too stressful" (43%) and "too much time required" (33%). It is important to note that principals serve under a lengthened contract (when compared to many other educators). Thus, perhaps there is a perception that in spite of relative high salaries, the financial rewards may seem less attractive when compensation relative to time worked is calculated.

The objective theory also considers other job benefits. In addition to enhanced financial incentives, public school administrators receive substantial opportunities to attend professional development conferences at the expense of the school district. Such training combined with on-the-job experience are necessary steps towards advancement to higher paying district level positions.

March and Simon (1958) believe that the balance between organizational inducements and the contributions an employee is allowed will ultimately determine the level of job satisfaction. "The balance of inducement utilities over contribution utilities decrease the propensity of the individual participant to leave the organization where decreases in that balance

have an opposite effect" (March and Simon, 1970, p. 108-09). The rewards offered a principal, whether economic, psycho-social or work context may ultimately influence the quantity and quality of candidates for the high school principalship.

The Quality Issue

A review of literature indicates that the perceived shortage of applicants for administrative openings in public high schools is not simply a matter of having adequate numbers of certified applicants to fill expected vacancies. The issue appears to be one of quality as well as quantity:

> There is a shortage of qualified candidates for principal vacancies in the U.S. About half of the surveyed districts reported that there was a shortage of qualified candidates for the principal positions they had attempted to fill. This shortage has occurred among all types of schools (rural, urban, suburban) and among all levels of vacancies (elementary, junior/middle, and high school). However, the interviewers did not indicate that they were dissatisfied with the people they hired, only that they perceived there to be a shortage of qualified candidates (Educational Research Service, 1998).

Anderson (1991) asserts that while many candidates possess the required certification, there is a perception that the number of 'highly capable' applicants may be tapering off. This concern is also shared by McCormick (1987) who believes that "bright, young administrators aren't appearing on the horizon" (p. 4) and more recently confirmed by Portin, Shen and Williams (1998).

Successful school principals function in the complex environment within and surrounding their organization. They require both leadership and management skills. Strong school leadership without effective management can lead to organizational chaos. Likewise, strong management not linked to effective leadership invites stagnation. The complex environment of a

public high school may discourage some applicants from pursuing the principalship (Educational Research Service, 1998, p. 7).

This study examines specific job and organizational attributes which influence the potential candidate as a decision-maker in the recruitment process. Unlike other studies, it uses a theoretical framework which examines the job and organization from an objective, subjective and critical contact perspective. Therefore, this model potentially provides a more sensitive examination of job and organization attributes which influence a qualified candidate to apply for and accept a principalship. In addition, while the study does not attempt to differentiate between a high quality versus a marginal quality candidate, the results of this study can potentially be used by school superintendents to improve the attractiveness of the principalship and thus bring more qualified applicants to the selection table.

Method

Using survey research methods, potential principal candidates assessed job and organizational attributes framed by job choice theory. Additionally, they indicated their attraction to a high school principalship and their likelihood of seeking, applying for, and accepting a high school principal position.

Study Population and Sample

The study population included secondary school administrators in one western state from the 2A (160-499 students), 3A (500-1149 students), 4A (1150-1699 students) and 5A (1700 students and up) classifications as designated by the state's school activities association. The population included 233 high school assistant principals and middle school (or junior high school) principals from the state. These candidates are a valid population for the study because

they are the most likely group from which future state high school principals will be selected. One hundred sixty-nine (N=169) usable surveys were returned from respondents, yielding a 72% response rate.

Procedure

Using the framework of job choice theory (Behling et al., 1968), objective, subjective, critical contact and work itself attributes for the position of the high school principalship were identified, in part by following models developed by Young et al. (1989) and Young et al. (1993). From a list of attributes which define and describe the high school principalship, potential principal candidates were asked to respond on a Likert scale to the influence each attribute had on their attraction to the high school principalship. Respondents also indicated their intentions to seek, apply for, and accept a high school principal position if offered. Demographic data were gathered on the applicant's age, gender, race, years of experience, current professional assignment, rural, suburban or urban location, size of school, marital status/family, and career goals.

Instrumentation

The independent variables for this study were variable scales developed from 65 attribute items which describe the high school principalship. However, items were randomly ordered throughout the survey instrument, rather than grouped by variable scale categories. The attributes were identified through examination of relevant literature, the inspection of actual job descriptions of the high school principalship and through a panel of high school administrators (principals and assistant principals). Following the lead of Young et al. (1989; 1993) the content validity of these attributes were evaluated by a "panel of experts," namely, three standing high

school principals, two high school assistant principals and one former high school principal. The panel members evaluated the list of job attributes that describe and define the high school principalship. The panel added to, subtracted from and/or clarified attributes on the list. The attributes were then placed into one of the job choice theory categories (variable scales) by the researcher. Before distribution to respondents, the content validity and clarity of the survey instrument were re-assessed by former high school administrators who now serve in district-level positions.

Attributes for the objective theory scale represented economic incentives. Using the list of attributes identified by Young et al. (1993) for teachers as a guide, parallel attributes for administrators were identified by the administrative team and included such items as salary, benefits, vacation, etc. Attributes for the subjective category scale were developed from the personal experience of the administrative panel concerning the psycho-social aspects of the school work environment, from school attributes developed in a pilot study conducted by the researcher in 1998, and from existing research on the principal's role from the subjective theory perspective.

The focus of the critical contact theory falls into two scale categories: (1) those attributes which identify the influence of others such as a recruiter, colleague or family member (either formal or informal) on the decision to seek the position (Behling, et al., 1968); and (2) those attributes which identify elements of the work itself, i.e. descriptors of the work of the principal (Young et al., 1993) as identified through the experience of the administrative team and from existing literature on the roles of the principal. An important source for identifying attributes for all three theories was a statewide study concerning educational leadership in the public schools

(Utah Educational Policy Center, 1996). In addition, a school context variable was developed which included such items as school size, school location and socioeconomic status of the school.

The dependent variables examined in this study were the potential principal candidate's response to the following items:

(1) The perceived attractiveness of the high school principalship.

(2) The perceived probability of seeking a high school principalship.

(3) The perceived probability of being offered a high school principalship.

(4) The perceived probability of accepting a high school principalship if offered.

Analysis and Results

Data were analyzed using bivariate and multiple regression correlations to determine the relationship between each dependent variable and the predictor (independent) variables. The reliability of each scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal consistency. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents and responses to the independent and dependent variables.

Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables

The independent variables for this study included objective, subjective, work itself, critical contact and school context variables. Each of these variables are composite measures of survey items which were grouped into the major study variables (independent variables) using an expert panel, professional experience of the investigator and job choice literature as a guide. The independent variables were then subjected to reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) to confirm the internal consistency of each variable scale. Table 1 reviews the alpha reliability for each

variable scale. All variables had reasonably strong reliability (alpha=.73 to .82) except for the "critical contact" variable which yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .43 and was therefore determined to be an unreliable indicator variable and was dropped from further analysis in the study.

TABLE 1
RELIABILITY ANALYSIS OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Independent Variable	# Items in the Variable Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
Objective Scale	8	.73
Subjective Scale	17	.82
Work Itself Scale	32	.82
School Context Scale	4	.79
Critical Contact Scale	4	.43

The study presented respondents with 65 job attributes (see Appendix 1) each of which were rated on a Likert scale as having a strong negative influence (-2) to a strong positive influence (+2) on their attraction to the high school principalship. After reliability analysis, the independent variables included in further analysis were objective, subjective, work itself and school context variable scales. The objective variable represents a measure of the value of the organization in terms of its relative financial worth to the individual, whereas the subjective variable represents the value of the organization in terms of its ability to meet an individual's social/psychological needs. The work itself variable is a measure of the actual work tasks and responsibilities the employee would perform in a high school principalship. The school context variable is a composite measure of such things as size, location, reputation and student socio/economic composition of the school.

Descriptive statistics for independent variables indicate that career decisions by potential

high school principal candidates appeared to be positively influenced by each factor. Table 2 presents means and standard deviations for responses to the independent variables.

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR INDEPENDENT VARIABLE SCALES

	Variable Scale	Mean (SD)	Interpretation of Response
Potential Principals' Attraction to the High School Principalship	Objective	.57(.57)	Slight Positive
	Subjective	.46 (.50)	Slight Positive
	Work Itself	.10(.43)	Neutral
	School Context	.47(.74)	Slight Positive

Survey Scale:
-2 Strong Negative Influence on Career Decision
-1 Somewhat Negative Influence on Career Decision
0 No Influence on Career Decision
+1 Somewhat Positive Influence on Career Decision
+2 Strong Positive Influence on Career Decision

Analysis of Independent Variable Item Responses

The respondents were asked to rate 65 attributes representing the independent variable scales for the study: objective, subjective, critical contact, work itself or school context variable scales (Appendix 1, Table A-1). An analysis of the means of the responses reveals that some attributes had a greater influence on survey respondents than others. Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations for the objective attribute items which had the strongest influence on the respondents. From the list of objective attribute items rated by the respondents, salary, retirement benefits and opportunity for professional advancement were rated highest by potential principals. There were no negative means for the objective attributes.

TABLE 3
MOST INFLUENTIAL ATTRIBUTES FOR THE OBJECTIVE VARIABLE

Objective Items	Potential Principals N=170	
	Mean	SD
Increased Starting Salary/ Salary Growth Potential	1.15	.87
Securing Increased Retirement Benefits	.96	.91
Increased Opportunity for Professional Advancement	.94	.84

Survey Scale:
+2 Strong Positive Influence on Career Decisions
+1 Somewhat Positive Influence on Career Decisions
0 No Influence on Career Decisions
-1 Somewhat Negative Influence on Career Decisions
-2 Strong Negative Influence on Career Decisions

Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations for the subjective attribute items which had either the strongest positive or strongest negative influence on potential principals. The data show that the subjective attribute items that had the strongest positive influence on the respondents were making a difference in the lives of others, empowering school change, and experiencing the opportunity to develop and grow from personal and professional relationships. However, potential principals reported that job stress, dealing with pressure from special interest groups and trying to balance family and job responsibilities had the strongest negative influence on attraction to the high school principalship.

TABLE 4
MOST INFLUENTIAL ATTRIBUTES FOR THE SUBJECTIVE VARIABLE

Subjective Items	Potential Principals N=168	
	Mean	SD
Desire to Make a Difference	1.50	.68
Empower School Change	1.36	.88
Personal/Professional Growth	1.28	.81
Leadership Opportunities	1.22	.73
Personal/Professional Relationships	1.05	.85
Pressure from Interest Groups	-.78	.85
Job Stress	-.80	1.07
Balancing Demands: Job/Family	-.81	1.13

Survey Scale:
+2 Strong Positive Influence on Career Decisions
+1 Somewhat Positive Influence on Career Decisions
0 No Influence on Career Decisions
-1 Somewhat Negative Influence on Career Decisions
-2 Strong Negative Influence on Career Decisions

Table 5 shows the means and standard deviations for the work itself attribute items which had either the strongest positive or strongest negative influence on respondents' attraction to the high school principalship. The most positive influential work itself attribute is the ability to provide leadership in school improvement through developing and selling a vision of the school to the school community. Potential principals also report they are attracted to the position through opportunity to work in the area of staff training and development, curriculum and policy development and working with PTA, alumni and business groups.

TABLE 5
MOST INFLUENTIAL ATTRIBUTES FOR THE WORK ITSELF VARIABLE

Work Itself Items	Potential Principals N=169	
	Mean	SD
School Improvement/Vision	1.20	.83
Staff Training and Development	1.10	3.20
Curriculum Development	.97	.92
Developing Community Relations	.89	.97
Developing School Policies	.76	.90
Career Ladder Management	-.30	1.06
IDEA/504 Issues	-.43	.96
Completing Reports	-.47	.87
Teacher Grievances/Unions	-.60	.91
Fee Waiver Management	-.64	.89
Extracurricular Supervision	-.66	1.21
Extended Work Day	-.76	1.03
Terminating Unfit Employees	-.81	1.08

Survey Scale:
+2 Strong Positive Influence on Career Decisions
+1 Somewhat Positive Influence on Career Decisions
0 No Influence on Career Decisions
-1 Somewhat Negative Influence on Career Decisions
-2 Strong Negative Influence on Career Decisions

In contrast, there were many negative aspects to the high school principalship which discouraged attraction to the position. The task of terminating unfit employees was rated by potential principals as the least desirable work itself attribute. With this understanding, it is not surprising to find that teacher grievances and teacher unions also negatively impact attraction. In addition, the respondents report negative attitudes toward paperwork, i.e. completing reports, fee

waiver management and IDEA/Section 504 issues. The extended work day which includes extracurricular supervision were also reported as attributes of the job which negatively impact attraction to the high school principalship.

The school context variable was composed of attributes related to size, student socio-economic status, location and reputation of the school. Surprisingly, the data presented in Table 6 show that none of the school context variables have a negative influence on potential principals' attraction to the high school principalship.

TABLE 6
MOST INFLUENTIAL ATTRIBUTES FOR THE SCHOOL CONTEXT VARIABLE

School Context Items	Potential Principals N=168	
	Mean	SD
Reputation of the School	.67	.89
Location of the School	.59	.96
Socioeconomic Composition of the School	.30	.83
Enrollment Size of the School	.27	.99

Survey Scale:
+2 Strong Positive Influence on Career Decisions
+1 Somewhat Positive Influence on Career Decisions
0 No Influence on Career Decisions
-1 Somewhat Negative Influence on Career Decisions
-2 Strong Negative Influence on Career Decisions

Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables

Dependent variables of the study focused on the respondents' perceptions of job desirability/attractiveness of the high school principalship. Potential principal candidates (high school assistant principals and middle school principals) find the high school principalship only "somewhat attractive", are only "somewhat likely" to seek a high school principalship, and are

only "somewhat likely" to accept a high school principalship if offered. Table 7 presents means, standard deviations and assessments of responses to the dependent variables.

TABLE 7
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR DEPENDENT VARIABLES

	Variable	Mean(SD)	Interpretation of Response
Potential Principals	Job Attractiveness	3.8(1.4)	Somewhat Attractive
	Probability of Seeking	3.7(1.8)	Somewhat Likely
	Probability of Being Offered	4.2(1.5)	Somewhat Likely
	Probability of Accepting	4.1(1.7)	Somewhat Likely

Survey Scale:

6	Very Desirable/Very attractive/Very Likely
5	Desirable/Attractive/Likely
4	Somewhat Desirable/Somewhat Attractive/Somewhat Likely
3	Somewhat Undesirable/Somewhat Unattractive/Somewhat Unlikely
2	Undesirable/Unattractive/Unlikely
1	Very Undesirable/Very Unattractive/Very Unlikely

In further analysis of the data, the frequency of responses of the potential principals was examined. From these data, 63% of the potential principals rated the job as "very attractive, attractive or somewhat attractive", while 40% rate their probability of seeking a high school principalship as either "very likely or likely." However, in reporting demographic data, only 29% of these same respondents indicate they have a career goal to seek a high school principalship.

These data were also analyzed by gender, the results of which are summarized in Table 8. Although males and females rate the high school principalship equally in terms of its attractiveness (males = 62.7%; females = 62.5%), females are more positive about their perceived probability of seeking, of being offered and of accepting a position as high school

principal. Table 8 was constructed by tallying the number of respondents who indicated positive responses (rating of 4-6 on Likert scale) to each of the dependent variable questions.

TABLE 8
SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF POTENTIAL PRINCIPAL TO DEPENDENT VARIABLES BY GENDER

	High School Principal Job Attractiveness Rating		Perceived Probability of Seeking a High School Principalship		Perceived Probability of Being Offered a High School Principalship		Perceived Probability of Accepting a High School Principalship	
	N	% Positive Response	N	% Positive Response	N	% Positive Response	N	% Positive Response
Male	118	62.7%	118	52.5%	116	71.6%	116	64.7%
Female	48	62.5%	47	68.1%	49	79.6%	48	79.2%

Bivariate Correlations Between Independent and Dependent Variables

Correlation coefficients (Pearson *r*) were used to assess bivariate relationships between independent and dependent variables. Potential principals' job attractiveness ratings showed a statistically significant correlation to the objective (r=.391), subjective (r=.512) and work itself (r=.443) variables. In addition, these same variables (objective r=.318; subjective r=.415; work itself r= .386) were significantly related to potential principal's probability of seeking the high school principalship. The subjective (r=.187) and work itself (r=.255) factors were significantly but weakly correlated with the potential principal's perceived probability of receiving a high school principalship job offer. The probability of accepting such an offer was significantly correlated with objective (r=.370), subjective (r=.417) and work itself (r=.395) variables for potential principals.

Table 9 summarizes independent and dependent variable bivariate correlations for potential principals. There are statistically significant relationships among independent variables; however, the magnitude of these correlations are not strong enough to warrant variable exclusion due to multicollinearity in the subsequent regression analysis. As would be expected, there are also strong correlations among several of the dependent variables, such as the correlation between the potential principal's high school job attractiveness rating and the probability of seeking (r=.755) and accepting (r=.720) an offer, and a strong correlation between the desire to seek a high school principalship and the probability of accepting such an offer (r=.843).

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression was used to determine the magnitude of the relationship between each dependent variable and the multiple predictor or independent variables. The forward method of multiple regression was used in which "the predictor that leads to the largest increase in R (multiple correlation coefficient) is added to the current set of predictors until the addition no longer leads to a statistically significant increase" (Gall, Borg, and Gall, 1996, p. 440).

Tables 10-13 present the results of regression analysis of the four dependent variables for potential principals. Multiple regression results of job attractiveness are shown in Table 10. The subjective (B=.423) and objective (B=.167) factors are statistically significant predictors of principal job attractiveness ratings. The coefficient of determination (R^2) for this model is .282, with most of the variance explained by the subjective factor (R^2=.262).

TABLE 9
INTERCORRELATIONS BETWEEN MAJOR STUDY VARIABLES FOR POTENTIAL PRINCIPALS

Variables	Objective	Subjective	Work Itself	School Context	HS Principal Attractiveness	Probability Seeking Job	Probability Job Offer	Probability Accepting Job
Objective	___							
Subjective	.524***	___						
Work Itself	.414***	.696***	___					
School Context	.244***	.340***	.235***	___				
HS Principal Attractiveness	.391***	.512***	.443***	.149*	___			
Probability Seeking Job	.318***	.415***	.386***	.042	.755***	___		
Probability Job Offer	.124	.187**	.255***	-.039	.333***	.504***	___	
Probability Accepting Job	.370***	.417***	.395***	.022	.720***	.843***	.437***	___

Pearson *r* (one-tailed) N=165
* p< .05
** p< .01
*** p< .001

TABLE 10
REGRESSION FOR POTENTIAL PRINCIPALS' HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP JOB ATTRACTIVENESS RATING

Dependent Variable: Potential Principal High School Job Attractiveness Rating						
Independent Variables	Beta	t	R	R Square	R Square Increment	Significance
Subjective Factor	.423	5.41	.512	.262	.262	.001
Objective Factor	.167	2.14	.531	.282	.020	.034

Excluded Variables: Work Itself Factor, School Context Factor

Table 11 presents the multiple regression results for the potential principals' probability of seeking a high school principalship. The regression shows the subjective (*B*= .284) and work itself (*B*=.193) factors are significantly related to the probability of seeking a high school principalship, although the correlations are weak. The total model explains only 19% (R^2=.192) of the variance in the dependent variable with the subjective factor explaining 17% of the variance in desire to seek a high school principalship.

TABLE 11
REGRESSION FOR POTENTIAL PRINCIPALS' PROBABILITY OF SEEKING A HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP

Dependent Variable: Potential Principal Probability of Seeking High School Principalship						
Independent Variables	Beta	t	R	R Square	R Square Increment	Significance
Subjective Factor	.284	2.95	.415	.172	.172	.004
Work Itself Factor	.193	2.00	.439	.192	.020	.047

Excluded Variables: Objective Factor, School Context Factor

Table 12 examines the multiple regression for the potential principals' perceived probability of receiving a high school principalship job offer. Only the work itself factor (*B*=.255) loaded into the regression as having a significant effect on the dependent variable. The

model explained less than 7% (R^2=.065) of the variance in the criterion variable.

TABLE 12
REGRESSION FOR POTENTIAL PRINCIPALS' PROBABILITY OF RECEIVING A JOB OFFER

Dependent Variable: Potential Principal Probability of Receiving HS Principalship Job Offer						
Independent Variables	Beta	t	R	R Square	R Square Increment	Significance
Work Itself Factor	.255	3.36	.255	.065	.065	.001

Excluded Variables: Objective Factor, Subjective Factor, School Context Factor

Table 13 examines the perceived probability of the potential principal accepting a high school principalship offer. The final model explains 22% (R^2=.224) of the variance in the dependent variable with the subjective (*B*=.181), objective (*B*=.197) and work itself (*B*=.192) factors contributing to the variance of the dependent variable. The school context factor was not found to significantly influence the potential principal's probability of accepting a high school job offer.

TABLE 13
REGRESSION FOR POTENTIAL PRINCIPALS' PROBABILITY OF ACCEPTING A JOB OFFER

Dependent Variable: Potential Principal Probability of Accepting HS Principalship Job Offer						
Independent Variables	Beta	t	R	R Square	R Square Increment	Significance
Subjective Factor	.181	1.76	.417	.174	.174	.080
Objective Factor	.197	2.40	.452	.205	.031	.017
Work Itself Factor	.192	2.02	.474	.224	.020	.045

Excluded Variable: School Context Factor

Discussion

This study originated from a concern raised about the availability of qualified candidates for secondary principalships. Results of this study suggest that the shortage of qualified applicants for high school principalships is in part due to the relatively small number of potential applicants who are interested in this position. While 63% of the respondents viewed the job as somewhat to very attractive, only 29% of the respondents indicated they are interested in the high school principalship as a career objective. Said another way, 71% of the applicant pool (middle school principals and high school assistant principals) would choose another administrative career alternative. In addition, the potential principal group reports that the high school principalship is only "somewhat attractive" and that they are only "somewhat likely" to accept a high school principalship offer.

The ERS (1998) study reports that only 27% of the respondents indicate that their districts have an aspiring principals program to recruit and prepare candidates. Thus, the perception of the position of high school principal being too stressful, too time consuming and underpaid (ERS, 1998) is not counter-balanced by widespread recruitment programs. The paucity of quality applicants for high school principalships could in part be alleviated through school district recruitment/attraction programs.

Insights into the perceptions of potential applicants about their feelings toward the high school principalship as a career move were obtained through job choice theory. This study hypothesized that job choice theory has utility to explain career intentions for potential high school principals as it does for potential candidates in other positions (Pounder & Young, 1996; Schwab, Rynes & Aldag, 1987; Young, 1989). The study supports these findings and adds to

the line of inquiry through examination of the high school principalship using job choice frameworks. Through bivariate analysis, moderate correlations between the predictor (independent) variables and the criterion (dependent) variables were found for objective, subjective and the work itself variables. School context, which is not part of Behling's (1968) original job choice model but was included in the study as a variable, was not found to have significant influence on potential principals' job choice decisions but did weakly influence the high school principalship job attractiveness rating.

Multiple regression analysis revealed the total model impact on potential principals' job choice decisions. The high school principalship job attractiveness rating was influenced by both the subjective and objective factors, with the subjective factor accounting for 26% of the total variance in the attractiveness rating. The study confirms the findings of Tom (1971) who provided evidence that subjective factors influence the organizational choice process. Consistent with Super's theory of vocational choice, i.e., that an individual's job choice is a way to implement self-concept, the present research leads one to the conclusion that applicants who make career decisions based on psychological needs (whether recognized or not) will be positively influenced by the "self-enhancing" subjective attributes of the organization. Descriptive data from this study supports this conclusion. Of the 65 attributes presented to potential principals, the three highest rated attributes which positively influence attraction to the high school principalship are: (1) Fulfilling the desire to make a difference, (2) being empowered to influence school change, and (3) receiving opportunities for personal and professional growth. Each of these attributes reside within the subjective job choice framework.

Not only did the subjective factor influence the applicant's job attractiveness rating of the

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high school principalship, but it was also significantly related to the potential principal's probability of seeking a high school principalship and probability of accepting an offer if given. Thus, while not discounting the view that job perceptions and intentions are "costless" exercises (Rynes, 1991), this study provided evidence demonstrating the desire of the potential candidate to act. That is, subjective organizational attributes positively influence applicants' job attractiveness ratings but also encourage candidates to seek and accept high school principalship offers.

The high school principal is typically the highest paid field officer in the public school system, yet the study provided evidence that the objective factor, which was defined in large part by the monetary gain advantaged to the employee, was not the strongest factor in the job choice decisions made by potential applicants. In contrast, the Educational Research Service (ERS) (1998) surveyed superintendents who had filled at least one high school principalship in the past year and had reported a shortage of candidates. Sixty percent of the respondents reported that the compensation was not sufficient for the job expectations. This perception of the lack of sufficient compensation was equally true for urban, suburban and rural superintendents.

Unlike the perceptions of superintendents in the ERS study, this study found objective factors were not as potent in their influence on potential high school principal applicants as other factors. Regression analysis showed the subjective variable as having a stronger influence than the objective variable on the job intentions of potential principals. However, this does not mean that objective factors are unimportant. Behling (1968) believes the objective factors are associated with lower level needs (i.e. financial self-assurance) while the subjective and critical contact factors would link with higher level needs (i.e. feelings of empowerment). Because high

school principals are among the highest paid employees in the public school system and therefore likely have their lower level needs satisfied (even if the compensation is inadequate for the job expectations), perhaps they are more strongly influenced by subjective attributes, which satisfy higher level needs. This interpretation is congruent with Behling's beliefs.

The work itself factor, a collection of job attributes which define the work the principal does, was also significantly related to perceptions of job attractiveness and job intentions. It was found that the perceptions of the work itself significantly correlated with the probability of seeking a high school principalship, the belief that such a principalship would be offered and the potential principal's probability of accepting a high school principalship offer. Tom (1971) believes that the subjective factor incorporates the other independent variables (namely, the objective, critical contact and work itself) because each of these factors tend to "create or modify the images of the organization" (p. 575). The data support this perspective. An examination of the bivariate correlations of this study reveal that the subjective and work itself factors are strongly correlated with each other and the subjective and objective factors show moderate correlation. These correlations would be expected if the subjective factor indeed incorporates the other independent variables. In addition, the strong correlation between the subjective and work itself factors suggest that the way people evaluate the work they do is linked to their psychological needs. The relationships among factors suggest a new model which should be tested. Perhaps, the work that the principal does (work itself factors) influences one's affective states (subjective factors), as moderated by working conditions (objective and school context factors), which ultimately predict job attractiveness and job intentions and behavior.

Respondent demographic data from this study were congruent with a state study (Utah

Education Policy Center, 1996) which confirmed the disproportionate percentage of males to females in high school principalships, middle school principalships and high school assistant principalships in the state. The high school principalship is considered by many as a masculine role, creating perceptions of sex-role incongruence for female applicants (Pounder, 1994). The issue of women's fit in high school principalships may in part be due to the strong influence athletics has on the high school as an organization. Historically, women have not had the exposure to the athletic program that men have had. In contrast, males have assumed leadership positions as head coaches in major sports (i.e. football and basketball) and as athletic directors. These leadership positions were natural steps toward becoming a high school administrator, positions not filled by many women. In addition, Pounder (1994) notes that sex-role incongruence is "one of the most common reasons for women's under representation in school administration...because the traditional stereotype of school administrators is not consistent with traditional female stereotypes" (p. 137-38).

Bowles (1990) believes that district level administrators are unwilling to tap women as "a reservoir for potential leadership" in secondary schools. Data from this study reveal that while an equal percentage of males and females rate the high school principalship as attractive, a substantially greater percentage of females indicate a probability to seek, be offered and to accept a high school principalship when compared to males. These data suggest that there is available to school districts a pool of female talent and that women may be a here-to-fore untapped resource for filling high school principalship roles. Bowles (1990) suggests "the challenge facing decision makers is to increase the practical experience of women and to direct efforts at hiring women as administrators in line positions" (p. 13).

Similarly, 94% of the respondents reported themselves as being Caucasian. These data coincide with research conducted within the state which found that 96% of all administrators (K-12) in the state are Caucasian (Utah Education Policy Center, 1996). Of the 169 potential high school principal applicants in this study, only 10 were of a race other than Caucasian. Thus, only 4% of the available in-state applicants for a high school position are of minority status. With racial and ethnic minority children increasing in population in public schools (Pounder, 1994) and the number of minorities in management positions being an issue (ERS, 1998), the expansion of the base of qualified minority applicants is crucial if leadership demographics are to match that of school student enrollment.

Limitations

This study examined factors which influence potential candidates to apply for and accept a high school principalship. The quality of the study was strengthened by the theoretical framework that guides the research. Specifically, the study used job choice theory as a theoretical underpinning.

However, the study had several limitations. First, it is unlikely that any study can effectively identify all of the job attributes which influence a potential candidate to apply for and accept a high school principalship. Instead, the project identified 65 attributes (from a potentially very large list) which the researcher believed were representative of the position of high school principal. All of the attributes were created from existing literature, principal job descriptions and administrator school experience (acting principals, assistant principals and an assistant superintendent) with an eye toward paralleling the attributes developed by Young, Rinehart and Heneman (1993) in a related study on teachers. The triangulation of attributes in this manner

strengthened the quality of the study in terms of reliability and validity. Nevertheless, the study sampled Utah administrators only and therefore the results are generalizable only to potential high school principal candidates in the study state.

Second, the attributes presented to the applicants may have been unfamiliar to them or they may not have had a basis for grounding them because of variations in the organizational context within which they work. Some candidates may have worked in systems where the acquisition of the high school principalship is a "rite of passage." In other words, if there were not enough candidates for a high school principalship (i.e. in a rural area), the process of "selection" and "job choice" is supplanted by a "placement" procedure. In such a system, the influence of job attributes on the candidate may have been greatly reduced by the manner of placement used by the district administration, thus confounding the study.

Third, it is important to note that the study addressed job intentions, not actual behaviors. Rynes (1991) clarifies this limitation by reminding us that stating ones' intentions is a "costless" exercise and may differ from actual job choice behaviors which have substantial impact on the applicant's future.

Finally, the literature review implies that there are adequate numbers of certified candidates for the high school principalship; however, the concern is that there are not enough *qualified* candidates. Anderson (1991) suggested that while the pool of potential candidates possessing the required certification is large, the number of "highly capable" applicants may be narrowing. This concern is echoed by others (ERS, 1998; Portin, Shen, & Williams, 1998). This research identified its sample to be those who currently hold a state administrative license and who are currently working as a high school assistant principal or middle school principal in a

state secondary school. It used no other criteria to identify qualified from non-qualified candidates.

Recommendations for Practice

The decisions made by potential candidates to pursue a high school principalship are in part tied up in the perceptions of the negative elements of the position. Watson (1979) states:

> The popular picture of the urban school principal is that of the man in the middle, caught up in a storm of angry and frequently contradictory demands. Besieged by noisy delegations of students, parents, teachers, or community residents, he finds himself simultaneously to blame for poor facilities, too much homework, insufficient time for faculty planning, and students' misconduct on the way to school. When he is finally able to close his office door, he is confronted by a desk full of forms to be filled out and telephone calls to be returned...Once he might have been a dignified scholar-statesman, presiding over serene classrooms of dutiful pupils. Today he often resembles the unfortunate victim of a pack of avenging furies. (p. 40).

The work of the high school principal involves long hours under often stressful conditions. This research has demonstrated that the negative elements of balancing the demands of job and family, dealing with the pressure from special interest groups, meeting the expectations of state and federal law and managing the mountain of paperwork are definite detractors to the position. But it also demonstrated that the high school principalship can be a position of empowerment to make significant differences in the lives of others and a position where one can grow personally and professionally. For Boards of Education, the attraction and retention of high quality individuals to the high school principalship is in part rooted in finding ways to reduce the negative elements of the job while enhancing the positives, perhaps by recognizing the influence of subjective elements and the work itself on career decisions.

This study and related research have identified several significant negative elements associated with the high school principalship. Since it is unlikely that the complex and

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demanding environment in which the high school principal exists will ease in the future, the influence of the negative elements of the job may be ameliorated through job redesign. For instance, this research has identified many of the "work itself" assignments of the public high school principal. While many principals attempt to assume all of the leadership and management roles of the school, many of these roles could be permanently assigned to assistant principals and lead teachers. Thus, such things as athletic management, space utilization, and technology initiatives could be managed by school personnel other than the principal. The principal might have main assignments such as instructional oversight, school budgeting, staffing, public relations and the coordination of the activities of other leaders within the school.

However, the redesign of the job of high school principal would not be without its challenges. Job redesign would necessarily require the principal to relinquish power and authority so subordinate leaders could be effective. In addition, the social system of the school encourages and expects principals to behave in certain ways as established by the school community. Any effort to change the "social role script" (Fein, 1990) of the principal could lead to role conflict (Hart, 1993) and thus, further complicate the assignment.

McCormick (1987) notes that "there is a concern that bright, young administrators are not appearing on the horizon" (p. 4) and the Educational Research Service (1998) confirms a lack of systematic recruitment of quality applicants. Currently, many teachers who desire to move into administration must take a reduced-pay sabbatical to meet the educational requirements of the position. Thus, the selection process is weighted toward families who can financially support the candidate's education, not toward the encouragement and financial support of quality candidates by local school districts.

If the high school principal "must wear many hats, draw on many sources for wisdom and inspiration...(and) must be an analyst, strategist, and diplomat" (Watson, 1979, p.53), this research suggests that school districts would be wise to develop programs to locate, encourage and financially support the education and skill development of its leaders, especially women and minorities. This encouragement and support should be continuous through the various career stages of the future administrator. It might start with a formal program in which the school district selects, places and financially supports a pool of quality candidates who are interested in secondary principalships in administrative certification programs. The program should include the offering of administrative internships and practicum training to its' candidate pool so each future principal receives specific "in-house" training from qualified field administrators. Later, these same individuals should receive mentoring and other support programs designed to assist new administrators in their succession to the principalship. Finally, district supervisors need to explore ways to improve the daily work life and job satisfaction of each principal through such things as stress reduction and workload management.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study suggests several avenues of interest for future research. While research confirms there are adequate numbers of certified candidates for the high school principalship, there appears to be a shortage of quality candidates. Who are the quality candidates, what leadership and management characteristics do they share and, if they are not choosing to apply for high school principalships, why? In addition, this paper has suggested there appears to be a resource of women applicants who have expressed interest in the high school principalship, yet there remains a disproportionate number of males serving in these principalships. What are the

organizational and social structure elements that contribute to this inequity and in what ways can they be remedied? In what ways can the position of high school principal be made more gender neutral?

Further, one element of the study suggested that the selection process used by the district tends to discourage potential applicants. Are quality applicants being discouraged by employer indifference, burdensome application procedures or other negative interactions between employer and potential employee? What is the nature of the formal and informal communications which either encourage or discourage potential candidates?

While this study attempted to take a holistic approach to job choice theory, i.e. examining all job choice theories in a single study, the majority of job choice studies have been conducted examining job choice from just one (objective, subjective, critical contact) perspective at a time. Little work has been done examining educational administration using job choice theory. For instance, this study opened a new research stream by introducing the work itself as a factor in attraction to the high school principalship. It is clear that potential applicants are sensitive to work attributes. This finding warrants further exploration and analysis of the work a principal does and how it influences career decisions. In addition, this research provides the first insights into the influence of subjective attributes on potential high school principal applicants and thus, suggests many future research opportunities.

This study suggests that the work itself influences job choice and the research design questions whether the work itself is indeed a critical contact variable. While Young, Rinehart and Place (1989) suggest that the work itself is part of critical contact theory, this study suggests a need to separate the work itself from the critical contact theory. A new theoretical perspective

may be as simple as revising Behling's job choice perspective to include four (objective, subjective, critical contact and work itself) rather than three (objective, subjective and critical contact) theories.

Other models have also been proposed. For instance, Young, Rinehart and Heneman (1993) have utilized a framework which includes extrinsic (objective theory), intrinsic (subjective theory), and work context variables (a combination of the work itself and school context) Harris and Fink (1987) grouped attributes together to form composite indices which included the job itself, compensation, work environment and minor fringe benefits. Job choice and job retention decisions are complex simply because they are influenced by so many organizational, psycho-social and work context attributes. An effort to develop explanatory models for the job perceptions, job intentions, and career behaviors of school administrators is warranted.

Conclusion

The results of this study in part confirm the belief of Behling et al. (1968):

> The average individual will be affected by elements of all three theories, but in varying degrees, in varying circumstances. The basic problem is establishing the interrelationships among the factors emphasized in the three theories (p. 18).

The study found the reactions of potential principals to be more positively influenced by nonpecuniary aspects (subjective factors) of the work environment than by economic incentives (objective factors). In addition, while previous studies (Rynes & Lawler, 1983) have indicated that teachers are influenced by school context variables like geographic location, this study did not confirm this finding for potential high school principals, i.e., the school context factor did not predict any of the job attractivenss or job intention variables. However, the study did confirm the

findings of Young, Rinehart & Place, (1989) who found that certain aspects of the work environment (work itself) influence career decisions.

The study adds to our understanding of how potential educators choose their careers. The results confirm the complexity of the factors that influence a individual to make certain career decisions. Even with the presentation of 65 job attributes from five different perspectives (objective, subjective, critical contact, work itself and school context), only a modest amount of variance in candidate attraction to the high school principalship was explained by the five factors. Clearly, other factors are at play in job choice decisions. In addition, this study adds to the line of inquiry by using for the first time job choice theory to examine the attractiveness of the high school principalship.

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Appendix 1
Potential Principal Responses to Job Attributes

High School Principal Job Attribute	Type of Variable	Potential Principals N=170	
		Mean	SD
Desire to Make a Difference	SUB	1.50	.68
Being Empowered to Make Change	SUB	1.36	.88
Personal/Professional Growth	SUB	1.28	.81
Receiving Leadership Opportunities	SUB	1.22	.73
Developing Vision for School Improvement	WI	1.20	.84
Increased Salary/Salary Growth Potential	OBJ	1.15	.87
Having Authority to Influence Others	SUB	1.07	.80
Personal/Professional Relationships	SUB	1.05	.85
Staff Training and Development	WI	1.01	3.20
Developing Curriculum	WI	.97	.92
Increased Retirement Benefits	OBJ	.96	.91
Receiving Increased Opportunity for Professional Advancement	OBJ	.94	.84
Developing Community Relations	WI	.90	.97
Developing School Policies	WI	.77	.90
Receiving Staff Loyalty/Support	SUB	.72	.86
Interviewing/Hiring Employees	WI	.72	.80

Reputation of the School	SC	.67	.89
Receiving Support from Parents/Students	SUB	.63	1.02
Educating Students-at-Risk	WI	.61	.92
Having Autonomy without Interference	SUB	.60	1.02
Encouragement from Educators to Take/Remain in Position	CC	.59	.95
Location of the School	SC	.59	.96
Supervision and Evaluation of Staff	WI	.51	.89
Respect/Esteem/Prestige Derived from Position	SUB	.46	.90
Defining Staff Roles	WI	.43	.84
Encouragement from Family/Friends to Take/Remain in Position	CC	.42	.93
Receiving Opportunity to Attend Conferences	OBJ	.42	.83
Working with Site-based Councils	WI	.37	1.00
Years Until Retirement	OBJ	.36	.92
Salary vs. Demands of the Position	OBJ	.35	1.30
Flexible Vacations	OBJ	.34	.98
School Budgeting	WI	.31	.93
Enrollment Size of School	SC	.27	1.00
Having Public Visibility/Accountability	SUB	.26	.87
Receiving Support from Superiors	SUB	.22	1.24

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Parent/Teacher Conferences	WI	.19	.68
Registration of Students	WI	.16	.80
Building the Master Schedule	WI	.13	.92
Administering Athletic Program	WI	.10	1.23
Dealing with Teacher/Staff Issues	WI	.08	1.16
FTE Management	WI	.04	.93
Having Adequate Funding to do Job	WI	.04	1.27
Dealing with Student Behavior Issues	WI	.02	.97
Dealing with Societal Problems in the School	WI	.02	1.10
Developing Partnerships/Fundraising	WI	-.01	1.13
Attending Required Meetings	WI	-.04	.98
Experiencing Ethical Dilemmas	SUB	-.06	.95
Assuming Accountability for all that Happens in the School	SUB	-.12	1.16
Dealing with Laws/Regulations/Policies	WI	-.18	.95
Countering Problem Situations	WI	-.26	1.06
Career Ladder Management	WI	-.30	.73
Selection Process Used by District	CC	-.40	1.10
Dealing with IDEA/504 Issues	WI	-.42	.95
Rotation of Principalship Assignments	CC	-.45	1.09

Completing Reports	WI	-.47	.87
Dealing with Teacher Grievances/Unions	WI	-.60	.91
Handling Fee Waivers	WI	-.64	.88
Extracurricular Supervision	WI	-.66	1.21
Extended Work Day	WI	-.76	1.03
Experiencing Pressure from Special Interest Groups	SUB	-.78	.85
Experiencing Job Stress	SUB	-.80	1.06
Terminating Unfit Employees	WI	-.81	1.08
Balancing Demands of Job/Family	SUB	-.81	1.13

Survey Scale:

+2	Strong Positive Influence on Career Decisions
+1	Somewhat Positive Influence on Career Decisions
0	No Influence on Career Decisions
-1	Somewhat Negative Influence on Career Decisions
-2	Strong Native Influence on Career Decisions

OBJ=Objective Variable
SUB=Subjective Variable
CC=Critical Contact Variable
WI=Work Itself Variable
SC=School Context Variable